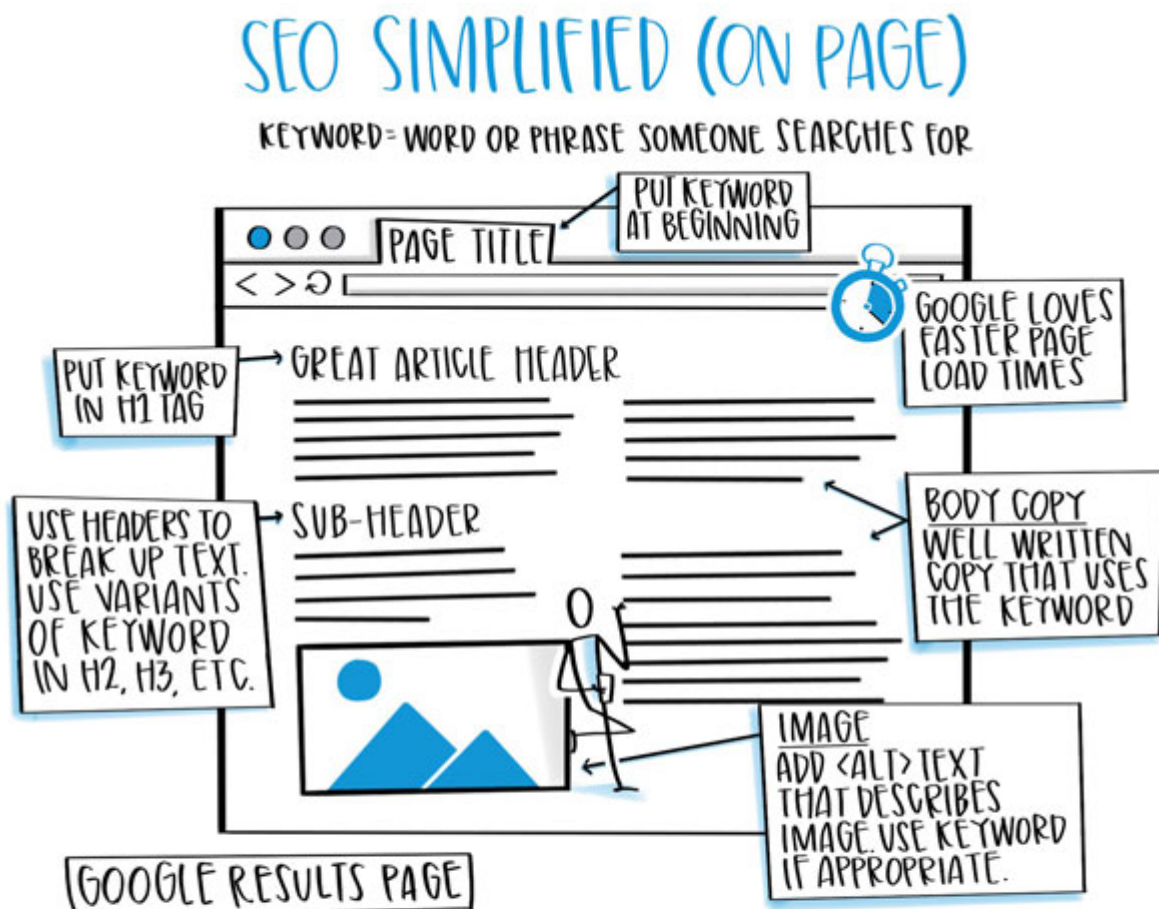


On-Page SEO in Plain English

Brandon Andersen, Chief Strategist, [ceralytics](http://ceralytics.com)

SEO is an ever-changing monster that is both exciting and terrifying. Done well, it can make your content pay off day after day, month after month, year after year. Done poorly, it can take a great piece of content and render it nearly unfindable.



PAGE TITLE IS CLICKABLE AND BLUE

META DESCRIPTION IS LISTED BELOW IT SO PEOPLE CAN GET AN IDEA OF WHAT YOUR PAGE IS ABOUT.

META DESCRIPTION:

NOT SEEN ON SITE, BUT IS YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH ON SEARCH RESULTS PAGE

Keywords – short, medium, and long tails.

The foundation of SEO is keywords. A keyword is the word or phrase that people are searching for in search engines – and for simplicity we will be replacing “search engines” with “Google” for the remainder of this email, because seriously, when was the last time you heard someone say, “I’ll Bing it?”

[Keywords come in three varieties.](#)

Short tail keywords target large numbers of people and are usually very vague, consisting of 1 to 2 words. “Pancakes recipe” would be a short tail keyword.

Long tail keywords target smaller numbers of people and are very specific, consisting of 4 or more words. “Healthy vegan blueberry pancakes recipe” would be a long tail keyword.

Long tail keywords used to be incredibly valuable in SEO, as they had low competition (not many other sites targeting that keyword) so you could more easily rank for them. The problem with long tail keywords was that you had to create a separate piece of content for each variation of the long tail keyword.

That is all changing. As Google’s algorithm better understands language and intent, it doesn’t need to be told very specific attributes of a search to bring back something relevant. So a medium tail keyword such as “vegan blueberry pancakes” is seen in a similar way by Google as the long tail “healthy vegan blueberry pancakes recipe.” This change means one medium tail keyword, and one piece of content, can rank for many long tail variants in a single piece of content.

Medium tail keywords are specific enough to be feasible to rank for, but still have enough search volume to drive significant traffic to a site.

A need for speed.

Google wants to give its audiences the best experience possible. That means getting people answers to their queries as fast as possible. If you have a slow site, Google isn't going to like you much.

Sites that load faster perform better in search.

As we'll see below, Google's need to give users the best experience possible also affects other aspects of SEO.

Page titles help Google and users

The page title, or `<title>` element, is one of the most important parts of the page to include your keyword.

The page title isn't necessarily the headline of your story. It's title that is in the tab in your browser when you load the page. It's not very big, it's hidden in code, but it's incredibly important.

When a user searches in Google, the page titles are the blue links on the results page that they click on to go to a site. If your page title doesn't include your keyword, or doesn't do a good job of making it clear what your content is about, people will ignore it in search results.

The meta description elevator pitch.

The meta description is never seen on your page. So why bother?

Well, your meta description is often the little blurb under the hyperlinked page title on a search results page. It's your elevator pitch to searchers. Along with the page title, it's

the only piece of information people see about your site on search results pages.

H1's, H2's, H3's...

Headline tags show what your content is about and also help break up your content into digestible bites. They are also used by Google to better understand what your content is about.

H1 tags are usually used for the main headline of the page. H2, H3, etc. are used throughout the content to break up the copy into readable sections.

Most people online skim articles, so creating easy to read sections broken up by headlines will help grab their attention and keep them on your content.

Body copy and pogo sticking.

There was a time when stuffing the body copy of your content with keywords would help SEO. That is NOT the case anymore. We don't want to tell you what to do, but we will tell you NOT to keyword stuff your content.

More and more, Google is looking at how people interact with your content instead of what the content actually is. If you stuff a bunch of keywords into a page, make it unreadable, and then annoy people with pop ups, ads, and other terrible things, they will leave your content and go back to the search results page.

When someone comes to your site from Google and then goes back to the search results page, it's called pogo sticking. It's a sign to Google that the person didn't find what they wanted on your page. Since your page didn't help the person, you will rank lower next time. Sorry.

If your content delivers on its promise from the title and meta description, the user gets what they want from you, and doesn't go back to the search results page, Google assumes you helped that person and will rank your content higher.

Image alt text.

The image alt text describes an image. It is used primarily by people with visual disabilities to understand what is in the image. Creating descriptive image alt text makes you a better human being.

Image alt text is also used by Google to understand what an image is. Google is also working on image recognition using AI, but some things like charts are hard for it to understand. Good alt text should adequately describe an image, but in far less than a thousand words. Creating descriptive image alt text makes you a better marketer.

Next steps

As content creators, SEO may not be one of the first things we think about when creating new content. But it should be. The way that content is conceived, the audience it targets, and how it is presented on the page are all crucial to SEO.

SEO isn't something that's done to content after-the-fact. It is a continuous part of the content creation process.

Those who do SEO well enjoy the exponential benefits of having content that continues to bring in new traffic long after it is published.

About Sketchalytics

Each week we send out a micro-lesson in marketing and/or business.

Our goal is **NOT** to give you best practices to go out and do what other people do. You can get that anywhere.

Instead, our goal is to **give you knowledge** that you can apply to your own organization to make the best decisions possible.

If you know anyone who you think would benefit from Sketchalytics, please feel free to share this with them so they can [sign up](#).